

**To:** jessica.e.ditto [REDACTED] **EOP/Ex. 6**  
**Cc:** Mashburn, John K. EOP/WHC [REDACTED] **EOP/Ex. 6**  
**Bcc:** patrick.wyrick [REDACTED] **Personal Address/Ex. 6**  
**From:** Benton, Donald  
**Sent:** Tue 2/7/2017 11:21:09 PM  
**Subject:** Alaska Forum and travel at the EPA

Jessica,

Sean may be asked about this as Bloomberg is running with a story and others may pick it up. Bloomberg may be out with it tonight so wanted you and Sean to be aware.

Don

Senator Don Benton

Senior White House Advisor

Office of the Administrator

202.564.4711



Early last week a member of the beachhead team (Me) asked the regions for a list of public events that they would be participating in for the month of February. This was the first time any such list of events had been in place. On the list was “The Alaska Forum”, an annual weeklong environmental conference held in Anchorage.

When we began to look into EPA’s planned participation we found that 34 EPA employees from at least two different regional offices and Washington D.C. were slated to travel to and attend The Alaska Forum at taxpayer expense.

We dug further and found that EPA employees were slated to serve on dozens of panels that touched on many topics including climate change. In fact, most panels included more than one

and often three or more EPA participants on the same panel.

This revelation caused us to ask about the overall EPA conference and travel budget. We found that in 2016 EPA spent \$44 million on travel and that at least 25 different conferences cost \$100,000 or more – per conference for a total of 5 million just on the 25 conferences that exceeded \$100,000.

We shared this information with the Acting Administrator and she agreed that 34 people did not need to attend one conference in Alaska. She worked with her team to reduce the size of the EPA contingent to 17 participants.

The Alaska Conference is taking place right now, this week from February 6 – 10.

Today (late this afternoon) a Bloomberg reporter called the Region 10 (Seattle) PAO and asked her why EPA “cut” the number of participants. Below is our response:

“Since January 20th we have been reviewing office expenditures. Last week during our review of expenditures we found that the EPA travel costs were \$44 million in 2016. We also found out that in the last year alone there have been at least 25 outside conferences attended by EPA employees that have cost the American taxpayers at least \$100,000 per conference. In the case of the Alaska Forum, there were 34 EPA employees scheduled to attend. The acting Administrator when notified of this agreed it was wise to reduce the size of the EPA contingent to 17. This is one small example of how EPA will be working cooperatively with our staff and our outside partners to be better stewards of the American people’s money.” – Doug Ericksen.

Doug is our designated EPA spokesperson (Beach head team member).

**To:** Grantham, Nancy[Grantham.Nancy@epa.gov]  
**From:** Ericksen, Doug  
**Sent:** Sat 2/11/2017 5:27:23 PM  
**Subject:** Re: A new query about Doug E.

Thank you for the heads up. I will handle. We can talk about it in person.  
Ericksen

Sent from my iPhone

On Feb 11, 2017, at 12:09 PM, Grantham, Nancy <[Grantham.Nancy@epa.gov](mailto:Grantham.Nancy@epa.gov)> wrote:

Hi doug –

Presume you are aware of this and talking with this person? Let us know if you need us to do anything here. thanks ng

**Nancy Grantham**

**Office of Public Affairs**

**US Environmental Protection Agency**

**202-564-6879 (desk)**

**Personal Phone/Ex. 6** **(mobile)**

**From:** Holsman, Marianne  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 09, 2017 5:57 PM  
**To:** Grantham, Nancy <[Grantham.Nancy@epa.gov](mailto:Grantham.Nancy@epa.gov)>; Valentine, Julia <[Valentine.Julia@epa.gov](mailto:Valentine.Julia@epa.gov)>  
**Subject:** A new query about Doug E.

And, another:

Justin Stercula? (garbled last name), The Planet, Western Washington University newspaper in Bellingham, WA (in Sen. Doug Ericksen's legislative district). Doing a profile on Senator Ericksen and his role at EPA on the Trump transition team. Phone: 610-955-3234, no email provided.

Came in today, no deadline specified. I will be out of the office tomorrow and won't be able to enter this in inquiry tracker.

Let me know how you want to handle.

Thanks.

Marianne

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**From:** Grantham, Nancy

**Sent:** Thursday, February 09, 2017 2:31 PM

**To:** Holsman, Marianne <[Holsman.Marianne@epa.gov](mailto:Holsman.Marianne@epa.gov)>; Valentine, Julia <[Valentine.Julia@epa.gov](mailto:Valentine.Julia@epa.gov)>

**Subject:** RE: Another reporter query on Alaska Forum Conference

Perfect thanks

**Nancy Grantham**

**Office of Public Affairs**

**US Environmental Protection Agency**

**202-564-6879 (desk)**

**Personal Phone/Ex. 6 (mobile)**

**From:** Holsman, Marianne

**Sent:** Thursday, February 09, 2017 5:30 PM

**To:** Grantham, Nancy <Grantham.Nancy@epa.gov>; Valentine, Julia <Valentine.Julia@epa.gov>

**Subject:** Another reporter query on Alaska Forum Conference

I have another one. Oddly from the same public radio network:

Rachel Waldholz, [rwaldholz@alaskapublic.org](mailto:rwaldholz@alaskapublic.org), 907-550-8432, Personal Phone/Ex. 6

She wants to confirm EPA attendees at the conference and info. on the Indian General Assistance Program.

I could send the statement and then this link:

<https://www.epa.gov/tribal/region-10-tribal-program>

Let me know what you think, or if you want me to refer to you.

Marianne

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**From:** Grantham, Nancy

**Sent:** Thursday, February 09, 2017 2:05 PM

**To:** Valentine, Julia <Valentine.Julia@epa.gov>

**Cc:** Holsman, Marianne <Holsman.Marianne@epa.gov>

**Subject:** FW: Here is the statement from Doug -- will you get this to the reporter? thanks  
ng

**Importance:** High

We can use doug's statement below (one we used prior) for the Alaska Mediia Inquiry.

Thanks ng

**Nancy Grantham**

**Office of Public Affairs**

**US Environmental Protection Agency**

**202-564-6879 (desk)**

Personal Phone/Ex. 6 **(mobile)**

**From:** Grantham, Nancy

**Sent:** Tuesday, February 07, 2017 3:12 PM

**To:** Holsman, Marianne <[Holsman.Marianne@epa.gov](mailto:Holsman.Marianne@epa.gov)>

**Cc:** Grantham, Nancy <[Grantham.Nancy@epa.gov](mailto:Grantham.Nancy@epa.gov)>

**Subject:** Here is the statement from Doug -- will you get this to the reporter? thanks ng

**Importance:** High

**Nancy Grantham**

**Office of Public Affairs**

**US Environmental Protection Agency**

**202-564-6879 (desk)**

Personal Phone/Ex. 6 **(mobile)**

**Statement from Doug Ericksen, Communications Lead for the EPA Transition Team**

“Since January 20<sup>th</sup> we have been reviewing the office expenditures. Last week during our review of expenditures we found that the EPA travel costs were \$44 million in 2016. We

also found out that in the last year alone there have been at least 25 outside conferences attended by EPA employees that have cost the American taxpayers at least \$100,000 per conference. In the case of the Alaska Forum, there were 34 EPA employees scheduled to attend. The acting Administrator when notified of this agreed it was wise to reduce the size of the EPA contingent to 17. This is one small example of how EPA will be working cooperatively with our staff and our outside partners to be better stewards of the American people's money."